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FROM: Guatemala City

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 937, June 9, 6 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
JUN 1951
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PASS DEFENSE

Embassy has received report from anti-government newspaperman regarding meeting last week between President Arbenz and officers of Superior Defense Council differing somewhat from earlier versions and indicating that officers had agreed to distribution of arms to civilians provided distribution was made by army zone commanders.

According to this version, Arbenz proposed to Council that arms be given to civilians to help Army defend government. While senior officers sat silent, young officer arose and told President he was unalterably opposed to giving arms to members of organizations controlled by Communists, and that Communists were responsible for all troubles of Guatemala today. Arbenz had quietly denied latter assertion and had then asked if young officer were Communist. Latter had said he w s not. Arbenz had then said that zone commanders could select persons of their confidence to distribute arms. Apparently no further objections were raised. As officers left meeting, a senior officer gave young man who had spoken out an ostentatious abrazo.

This version was given newspaperman by officer who attended meeting. If true, it would indicate that Arbenz had succeeded in maneuvering Army out of previously reported total opposition to arming civilians and would place great opportunities for good or evil in hands of zone commanders.

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